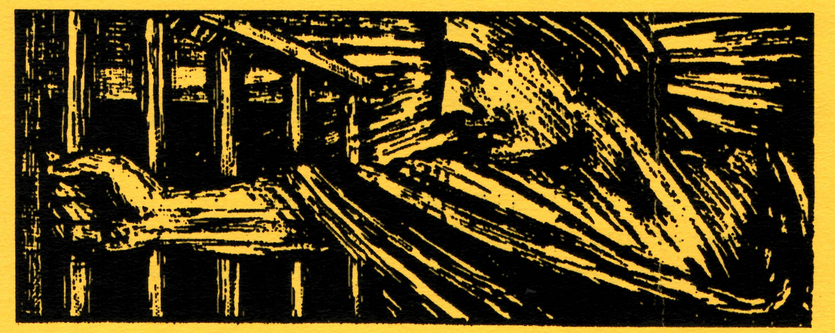


PRISON
JUSTICE DAY

Thursday August 10 is Prison Justice Day, held every year to commemorate the suicide in 1974 of Eddie Nolan, a former prisoner at Millhaven Penitentiary who had spent several years in solitary confinement. August 10th is the day that the prisoners wish to dedicate to those who have died alone and in horrendous conditions, those murdered and those who could no longer cope with the terrors of prison and so resorted to the taking of their own lives. Cruelly, prisoners are threatened with a variety of punishments for participating in that day of reflection, mourning and fasting in honour of the dead. Everyone and anyone is invited to share in what the day represents, whether inside the walls or outside the walls. We ask that people lend support to this day.

Prison Justice Day Committee Toronto

The Toronto Prison Justice Day Organizing Committee has been together for two years and helps to organize events around Prison Justice Day in Toronto, including the car caravan, and last year a public forum. This year our demands for Prison Justice Day were developed in solidarity with various prisoners and prisoner groups in Canada. Also this year the definition of 'prisoner' is being deliberately extended to include people locked up in psychiatric institutions — psychiatric inmates. Whether an institution is called a 'hospital', 'mental health centre', or 'jail', a prison is a prison is a prison. We have included a list of the demands as well as short descriptions of what the different demands mean.

PJD Demands

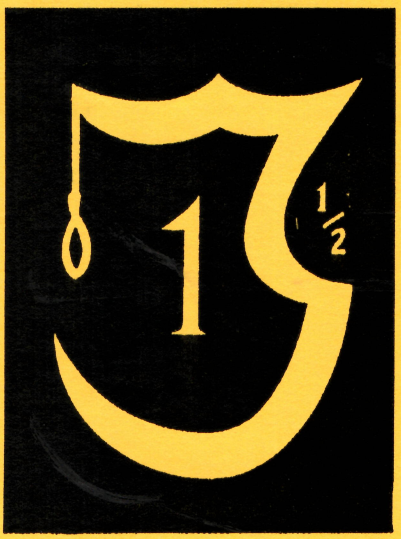


Image: Ron Dube. The symbol 13 1/2 is a traditional tattoo design popular amongst prisoners. It menas 12 jurors, 1 judge, & half a fuckin' chance

◆ 1. Provide prisoners with wanted services, information and visits.

◆ 2. Public investigations for those killed in prison and police custody

◆ 3. Stop forced transfers and solitary confinement.

◆ 4. Stop genocide of Native people.

◆ 5. Stop imprisoning Women and house Women in their home provinces

◆ 6. End 25 year sentences and indefinite sentencing.

◆ 7. Stop forced treatment.

◆ 8. Close immediately Millhaven, Prison for Women and Oak Ridge, Penetang.

◆ 9. Provide AIDs education, prevention, and treatment inside.

◆ 10. End Imprisonment without trial — no involuntary committal.

End Forced Transfers and Stop Solitary Confinement

Transfers of inmates from one penitentiary to another occur at times of convenience for the prison administration. Interregional transfers, from one province to another, occur approximately every 6 months.

Transfers are one of the major means used to break up political organizations within prisons. Seldom is any reason or notice given to an inmate or his/her family. Prisoners who speak out about prisoner rights are threatened with transfer if they don't agree to silence themselves.

A recent case which involved an extreme example of manipulation of prisoners' rights was when 6 members of the Inmate Committee of Millhaven were transferred first to Protective Custody and then to Archambeault. This occurred after organized sit-down strikes protesting general conditions and specifically the murder of Sandy Fitzpatrick. No notification was given to family members and there was no justification other than to name one member of the committee as a "predatory inmate" (in spite of the fact that he had not ever been charged with any violent offense in the prison). These men all anglophones, were shipped to Archambeault Québec and one was then sent to Dorchester. One man was returned to Millhaven in November '88 under conditions that if he were to participate again in Committee activities, he "understood" he would be sent to B.C. The last member of this group was returned to Millhaven in May of '89. However, after barely 24 hours he was charged with "breach of security" and was only released from solitary confinement in July '89 after a strenuous campaign by family and friends.

Solitary confinement is punishment for any range of intra-prisons crimes. This punishment is completely arbitrary and in the hands of the security branch of the administration, as there are no public trials, no maximum sentences. Basically no rules: you stay in the hole as long as they deem necessary.

Solitary confinement means no privileges: being held basically incommunicado unless you're lucky enough to reach the ear of a sympathetic guard or a fellow inmate with privileges who can smuggle in a cigarette or smuggle out a message to a loved one. There is 1/2 hour yard exercise, no letters allowed (other than to m.p.s), no books (other than a bible), showers at the whim of staff and you are prey to any additional punishment the individual guards think necessary.

End 25 Year Sentences and Indefinite Sentencing

When someone is convicted of first degree murder they are given a life sentence which means no opportunity for parole for 25 years. This is inhumane and totally unacceptable. People who plead "Not guilty by reason of insanity" are placed on a Warrant of the Lieutenant Governor. They are then incarcerated in a psychiatric facility indefinitely. Most people on a WLG spend considerably more time inside than they would had they plead guilty and received a definite sentence. While indefinite sentencing was outlawed in the criminal justice system, (not the psychiatric system) it has reappeared in the name of the "dangerous offender". Women and men are now being held past their release date. This is unconscionable and should be abolished immediately.

Stop Forced Treatment

In prisons and psychiatric institutions, forced treatment is the rule. One very common and dangerous treatment is drugging ("medication"). Most drugs prescribed in today's prisons and psychiatric institutions are the "anti-psychotics" such as Thorazine, Stelazine, Haldol and Modecate, as well as "antidepressants" such as Elavil, Tofranil, Sinequan and Desyrel. Their chief purposes are to eradicate dissident behaviour and enforce conformity. These drugs are so powerful that they can immobilize a person within minutes or a few hours. They also cause many serious and permanent "side effects" such as brain damage (e.g. parkinsonism and tardive dyskinesia), and death. Prisoners at greatest risk of being drugged against their will are women and those labeled depressed or suicidal, "psychotic", "troublemaker", or those selected for drug experiments.

Behaviour modification is another forced treatment. This treatment is actually obedience training or brainwashing. Its more punishing versions are called "aversive conditioning." In Ontario, special behaviour modification programs for sex offenders currently exist in Kingston Penitentiary and the Clarke Institute of Psychiatry in Toronto. Drugging and solitary confinement and cattle prod electric shocks to various parts of the body, are often included in this "treatment". Prisoners at greatest risk of being subjected to behaviour modification are sex offenders, drug addicts, those labeled "psychopathic" or "sociopathic", and political dissidents including Black and Native leaders.

There is no such thing as "informed consent" or the right to refuse treatment in the prison-psychiatric system, because;

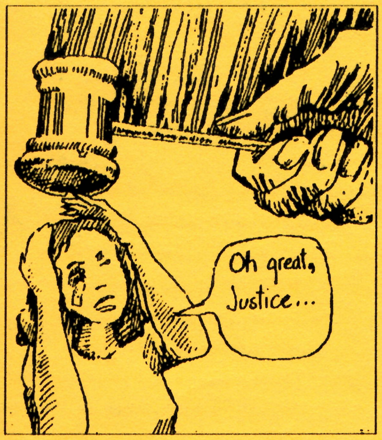
1. This system is inherently coercive and intimidating.

2. Doctors routinely fail to inform prisoners and psychiatric inmates about the major risks of and alternatives to any treatment.

Forced treatment is cruel and unusual punishment and torture. It violates The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, The United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and The Nuremberg Code of Medical Ethics.

Stop Imprisoning Women and House Women in Their Home Provinces

The vast majority of Women's crime is economically based, that of theft, fraud and prostitution. Women convicted of these crimes tend to be poor, native, sole support mothers and have little formal education. Women do not tend to commit violent crimes and when they do it's to kill the men who abuse them and their children. Women by their very crimes are not a danger to society and should not be imprisoned at all. We demand that they be housed in community-based houses in their home provinces and be offered opportunities to improve their situation.


Oh great, Justice...

Close Immediately Millhaven, Oak Ridge and Prison for Women

Millhaven is a maximum security federal prison for men. It was originally built to be an "Alcatraz", a tomb for the "most dangerous" prisoners. It opened its doors early to squelch and subdue rioting prisoners of Kingston Penetentiary (K.P.). Roger Caron describes the prisoners' arrival at Millhaven in his book, Bingo. They were beaten, and humiliated by angry K.P. guards. It is no surprise then that it is this institution that gave birth to Prison Justice Day (PJD). PJD was a response to one such death, Eddie Nolan, 1974. Millhaven by its very structure and history is dangerous to prisoners and must be closed immediately.

Oak Ridge is a psychiatric prison for men who have been convicted of being "not guilty by reason of insanity". Like Millhaven, it is described as imprisoning the "most dangerous offenders". This unfounded claim is used by the administration to scare the public and the media into accepting anything that the administration says and does in the name of "therapy/treatment". Further, most staff are related and actively cover up for each other. This cover-up extends to the local area police, government and lawyers. The history of Oak Ridge is that of extreme abuse. This along with its location and corrupt administration proves Oak Ridge cannot be reformed, it must be closed immediately.

Prison for Women (P4W) is the only federal prison for women in Canada. While male federal prisoners are imprisoned in their home provinces, women from across Canada go to Kingston, Ontario. Most provincial jails will not accept federal women despite its being legal. This means many women are unable to see their children ever for the length of their sentence. This alone takes its toll on women. Many do not see any visitors for this reason as well. There are practically no vocational and educational programs at P4W. Many more programs are offered in male prisons and what does exist reinforces sexist stereotypes. Sadly for the women inside this means deaths and slashings. Marleen Moore, the "most dangerous female offender", died while in segregation at P4W in 1989. Unfortunately the solution some organizations are suggesting is the addition of a psychiatric unit. Given that psychiatry is inherently sexist, women will only be hurt further by this. Women inside P4W have shown that they will use feminist counselling when it is available. More such counselling and other supportive services are desperately needed.

Provide Prisoners With Wanted Services, Information and Visits

The main service needed by prisoners is consistency of free public access to the prison environment. Public knowledge of the treatment of prisoner's and involvement in policy decisions is needed to protect the basic human rights of those incarcerated. Relaxation of the strict censorship policy of correspondence to and from prisoners is also necessary to allow inmates to retain their freedom of thought and expression.

More counselling is desperately needed. Particularly Native counsellors.

Services surrounding visiting of family and friends need to be expanded to provide privacy, better child-care facilities and inexpensive access to the prisons.

Provide AIDs Education, Prevention, and Treatment Inside

People living with AIDS (PLWA) in prisons and psychiatric institutions do not have access to promising new treatments for AIDS and related conditions, up-to-date AIDS information, or even healthy meals or warm cells! Condoms, clean needles, and bleach for cleaning needles (tattoo needles— not just needles for IV drugs) are contraband, and safer sex and needle use information is suppressed. This willful neglect means that growing numbers of prisoners are becoming infected with HIV.

We demand that State and corrections bureaucrats implement the Royal Society of Canada recommendations that free condoms, needles, and facilities for cleaning dirty needles be made available in all jails and prisons.

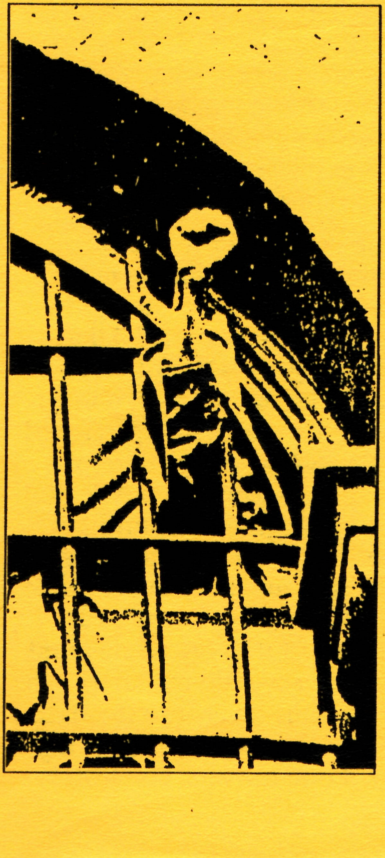
We demand appropriate treatment, facilities, nutrition, counselling and access to an HIV physician of their choice for AIDS-affected inmates, and up-to-date AIDS education for inmates and guards.

Last February, at a demonstration in front of the Toronto City (Don) Jail in support of the demands of HIV-positive inmates, AIDS ACTION NOW! called for a conference to bring together prisoners, community AIDS groups, Prisoner Rights groups, Correction Services, Union representatives of prison employees, and the Ministry of Health. But the Ministry of Correctional Services has without consultation put into place a new Communicable Diseases Policy. The Policy betrays a profound ignorance of AIDS symptoms and treatments, and rejects the Royal Society recommendations on the grounds that sex is illegal in ministry facilities.

But making sex among prisoners illegal won't make it go away, and denial of its existence, and of the existence of lesbian and gay inmates, endangers people's lives.

A special segregation unit for HIV positive prisoners is being discussed. This unit must be implemented with the recommendations from HIV-positive prisoners and community representatives. AIDS support groups must be made available immediately under full control of prisoners so they can define, access and communicate their needs. Prisoners with AIDS and AIDS concerns must be allowed free and confidential communication with outside AIDS organizations of the inmates choice and without institutional interference. Otherwise we may find quarantine camps starting in local prison facilities, because Prison authorities would like to deny PWAs access to support and full medical treatment.

Another demand under policy for prisons is no forced HIV anti-body testing and full scale anonymous testing for anyone requesting a test.



No Involuntary Committal

Any Canadian can be imprisoned involuntarily in a prison known as a 'psychiatric facility' by the decision of 1 or 2 psychiatrists. This imprisonment is called 'involuntary committal'. Such an inmate, deceptively referred to as a 'patient', can periodically contest their committal to a review board. Boards, however, generally concur with the psychiatrist. The grounds for this imprisonment are person's being considered dangerous to self or others. Alarmingly, these grounds are deemed sufficient to imprison someone even though:

1. No trial has occurred

2 The person is suspected of no offence

3. As Clarke psychiatrist Stephen Hucker has demonstrated, psychiatrist have no ability whatsoever to predict dangerousness.

A person can be held indefinitely on such grounds, as long as the psychiatrist keeps applying for and is granted periodic certificates of renewal. Correspondingly, people who commit themselves voluntarily can, at any time, have their committal changed to 'involuntary' with the use of these grounds. People so committed are likely to find themselves coerced into accepting 'treatments' like psychiatric drugs which will damage them and further restrict their freedom, all this allegedly 'for their own good'. 'Involuntary committal' and the grounds which underlie it are hopelessly paternalistic, are incompatible with due process, basic human rights, and even logic, and it should be discontinued immediately.

Stop Genocide of Native People

Justice for native people continues to be denied within a system which is inherently racist; from the lack of native court and social workers, translators, lawyers, and judges; to the lack of significance given to cases such as Helen Betty Osborne, whose rape and murder has taken 18 years to fully investigate; from the lack of religious freedoms within prisons; the lack of access to medicine bundles, ceremonies, and a recognition of their right to practice them; to the higher incarceration rates across Canada for native women and men, who are approximately 3% and 7% of the street population respectively, and yet are above 50% and 60% of the population in prisons.

The justice system has historically and systematically attacked and criminalized native peoples' ceremonies, languages, and economies. This is still going on today, in the effort to destroy their autonomy and will to resist the ongoing exploitation of their land and the resources that lie within them. Leonard Peltier is an example of this, hunted for a crime he did not commit, extradited from Canada on evidence falsified by the FBI, and left to rot in jail for the last 14 years. All because he was attempting to encourage self determination for his people, and engaged in legitimate avenues of dissent. Proof that the courts play an active role in this oppression can be seen in The Canadian Supreme Court's recent refusal to review his extradition, despite that evidence supplied by the FBI has been proved false.

The continuing complicity of the police, courts and prisons in the legacy of genocide towards Native people needs to be fully exposed and rooted out. Native Prisoners must be free to practice their culture and religion while inside without fear of repression.

Other Prison Justice Day Events

The Cultural Evening

Thursday August 10, 7:30 pm
A Space Gallery, 183 Bathurst St. (at Queen).
Admission Free. Donations Welcome

The Written Word Committee of A Space hosts an evening of songs and readings — prose, poetry and scripts — which have been created by Canadian and International prisoners. This event is to promote understanding and solidarity between people on the inside and those on the outside. Writers and artists, ex-prisoners, their families and friends are encouraged to attend.

Four Directions Circle Event

Friday, August 11, 8pm.
Native Canadian Centre, 16 Spadina Rd (above Bloor).
Admission by Donation.

Four Directions Circle presents a video: Great Spirit Within the Hole about native inmates using their spiritual traditions inside the prison walls.